

Reviewed by Karen Williams

## Once upon a Jungle

Written by Laura Knowles /Illustrated by James Boast  
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56

Our journey into the rainforest ecosystem begins, “Once upon a time there lived a jungle ....” On the first page, the eyes of a black panther peer from the darkness of the understory. The interdependent living world of the rainforest is depicted as each creature emerges. Ants, a praying mantis, a lizard, and a monkey each supersede the previous animal in the circle of life. The panther, the top predator, grows old and, without words, the illustrations subtly indicate the panther’s death. The colorful swarm of beetles in a silhouette of a panther becomes the claw and foreleg bones buried beneath the enriched soil. The decomposition nourishes the new life of seedlings, the plants that nurture all the creatures of the rainforest.

James Boast’s vivid illustrations enhance the minimal narration. Vibrant flowers, vines, and rainforest creatures pop from the black background. The bright blue sky and colorful flying parrots of the canopy contrast with the illustrations of the understory and forest floor.

*Once upon a Jungle* offers many rich possibilities for the music classroom. Exploring the various ways the animals move can be extended into sound and dance. Creeping monkeys may become scratching, dancing, jumping, or swinging monkeys, with whoops, chitters, laughs, or other monkey noises

accompanying the motions. Sounds for marching ants, snacking lizards, sprouting seedlings, roaming beetles, and pouncing panthers may be layered into complementary ostinati. These might be transferred to unpitched percussion, or body percussion, or extended to melodic instruments. Organizing and refining the animal-inspired movement may culminate in creating imaginative dances suitable for performance.

Another interesting option is to use a melodic piece to accompany the dance for each character. Student or teacher compositions using a limited pitch set such as sol-mi-la or do-re-mi, pieces from the *Music for Children* volumes, or songs inspired by folk material would work well. Consider changing the mode of a simple pentatonic piece to create a contrasting affective tone color for each of the different creatures. Add a musical introduction before the narration and a coda at the completion of the story to round out the performance.

Following the story, pages that explain the rainforest ecosystem reinforce cross-curricular objectives. Students’ classification of each creature within the food-web categories of sunshine, producers, consumers, and decomposers connects with the science curriculum. The fold-out illustrations of the animals in the canopy, understory, and on the forest floor may be used to highlight additional living beings not featured in the story.

The rainforest theme of *Once upon a Jungle* can be extended using other books. In addition

to original poetry, students may choose to explore poems from *Rejoice! Poetry Celebrating Life in the Amazon Rainforest* by the third-grade students of Mendon Center Elementary in Pittsford, New York. The theme continues with *Over in the Jungle: A Rainforest Rhyme* by Marianne Berkes and Jeanette Canyon, an adaptation of the song *Over in the Meadow*. The instrumental arrangement of *Over in the Meadow* from Doreen Hall's edition of *Music for Children, Volume I* can accompany the song. Expand exploration of music and movement ideas inspired by other ecosystems with similar books, such as *Somewhere in the Ocean* (Ward), *Over in the Grasslands: On an African Savannah* (Berkes), *Over in the Forest* (Berkes), *Deep in the Swamp* (Bateman), *Over*

*in a River* (Berkes), or *Way Out in the Desert* (Marsh).

The simple narration and rich illustrations of *Once Upon a Jungle* invite creative interpretation through music and movement. Appealing and adaptable for younger as well as older students, *Once Upon a Jungle* is a worthwhile addition to the music class library. ■

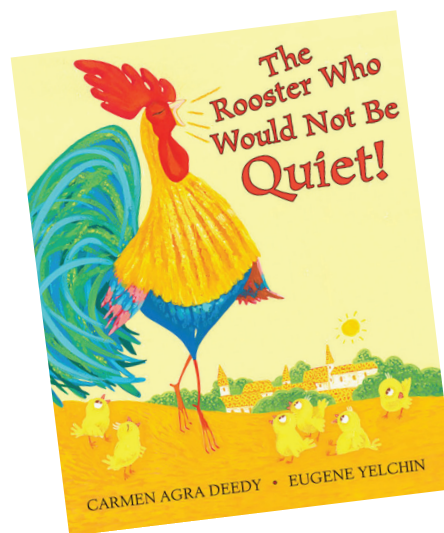
**KAREN WILLIAMS** is a graduate of Duquesne University and earned her master's degree in music from Baylor University. She has completed three levels of Orff Schulwerk Teacher Education and Master Class and is also a certified Dalcroze Eurhythmics instructor. Karen is a member of the Heart of Texas Chapter of AOSA. During her 36 years in education, she taught middle school band, Grade 4 general education, Grades 2–5 remedial reading, and elementary school music.

## CHILDREN'S BOOK

Reviewed by **Victor Lozada**

### The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet!

Written by Carmen Agra Deedy  
 Illustrated by Eugene Yelchin  
 Scholastic Press, 2017



has been banned. Eugene Yelchin's illustrations juxtapose the bright, cheerful times of La Paz with music against the dull, somber times of La Paz without music. The story presents an inextinguishable voice through an appealing character. The author includes a powerful one-page note to the reader at the end of the book, celebrating those who "resist being silenced, who will crow out their truth without regard to consequence."

“**K**ee-kee-ree-KEE!” went the rooster! Are you awake yet? I am. Carmen Agra Deedy’s *The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet!* (also available in Spanish with translation by Madelca Dominguez) tells the story of a strong-willed rooster that reawakens the city of La Paz after all singing